



Lee Harvey Oswald

OSWALD - as only a Marine Buddy Could Know Him

by Kerry Thornley

PART THREE

OSWALD

Marine Private Lee Harvey Oswald and I parted company for the last time when I was transferred to Japan in 1959.

Lee had told me to be on the lookout in Japan for what he called "U.S. imperialism" — the behavior of American servicemen toward the natives of the Far East.

He was much more bitter about this problem than I was at first. I thought the serviceman's bad behavior, a result of boredom in the peacetime occupation forces, was more private delinquency than diabolic imperialism.

However, I became increasingly perturbed over G.I. behavior and the long-range effect it

was having on Japanese good will.

More and more I came to feel that the book I was planning should deal with this problem. And at last, stimulated by a chance comment, I hit upon the perfect title: "The Idle Warriors."

Yet I still lacked an essential ingredient for a good novel. I needed a central theme to tie in with all the minor themes I wanted to handle.

Then, one afternoon in the barracks, a friend who had also known Oswald handed me a copy of "Stars and Stripes" and said, "Look!"

There was an article about a Marine who after getting out of the service had gone to Russia

and requested Soviet citizenship. Of course it was Oswald.

It was not until then that I really believed his commitment to Communism was serious. I was surprised, and I wondered how he had come to his decision.

And then I sat down and began work on "The Idle Warriors." I had my theme.

The book was about the gradual moral breakdown of a Marine who finally defects to Russia. In earlier drafts, certain sections were based almost entirely on Oswald.

As a matter of fact, my main character's name originally was Lee — Lee Shellburn. Later I changed the first name to Johnny.

But the book was not intended

ABOUT the AUTHOR

Kerry Thornley is a young writer who was a Marine Corps buddy of Lee Harvey Oswald, President Kennedy's accused assassin.

This is the third of a series of four articles by Mr. Thornley based on his remembrances of one of the 20th Century's strangest characters. Thornley, who appeared before the Warren Commission as an expert witness, obviously knew Oswald better than anyone outside the slayer's family — and perhaps even better than they.

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John F. Kennedy

INSANE?



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as a carbon copy of Oswald's life and philosophy, although it certainly reflects Lee's character in many places.

Working on the book took most of my off-duty hours for the rest of my duty tour, during which time I heard nothing more about Oswald.

After getting out of the Corps, I went to live in the New Orleans French Quarter and, working part-time, I finished a type-written draft of my novel.

After two publishers rejected it I decided the manuscript needed more work. So I put it away to "incubate" and turned to other things.

In June of 1962 I received a

newspaper clipping from my parents, who knew of my interest in Oswald. It was headed, "Ex-Marine Loses Love for Russia," and it told of Lee's decision to return to Texas with his Russian wife and baby.

Once again I was surprised. It seemed unlike Oswald to ever admit to the world that he was wrong.

At that time I thought seriously about going to see him before starting the rewrite. He could provide valuable information.

But after considering the time and expense involved, and that my outline for the new draft of the book had strayed away from the character of Oswald, I decided against it.

Then came the assassination. I was working as a bartender in New Orleans when the terrible news was flashed of JFK's death and Oswald's quick arrest.

From the moment I heard that it was Oswald who was in custody until after he was gunned down by Jack Ruby, I did not believe he could be guilty.

But as the facts came in I changed my mind. I decided there must have been more violence in him than I thought.

I didn't see Lee being killed on television and I'm glad I missed it.

It was enough of a shock to see a picture on every newspaper front page of a person I once knew being shot in the belly.

But on looking at a sequence of photos that included a snap of Lee just before Ruby rushed up with his pistol, I noticed that same defiant little grin, perhaps a sinister smile, that hid such a complexity of pain and confusion.

When the news of Oswald first began to appear, I wondered how any man could have changed so thoroughly in a few short years.



For instance, a national news magazine called him a psychopath, neurotic, schizoid, paranoid and a probable homosexual — all in the same column of print!

Suddenly I was reading that he had fought constantly with his fellow Marines and that in the service he displayed a conspicuous zest for physical violence.

I had observed no such traits when I knew him in the Marines.

Oswald had his psychological problems all right, but I doubt that he would have been found legally insane had he lived to face a jury.

I told the Warren Commission this, and the fact that a large part of its report was devoted to rooting out rumors is proof enough to me that a great deal of fabrication and exaggeration was put out and is still believed.

It might be argued that anyone capable of committing the crime for which Oswald stands accused would have to be insane.

If that's the case, then Oswald's type of insanity is so prevalent in the world today that it could be considered "normal."



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